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# The layers of memory at Sachsenhausen: from the GDR to contemporary Germany

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The Layers of Memory at Sachsenhausen: From the GDR to Contemporary Germany

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Departmental Thesis

The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga


History

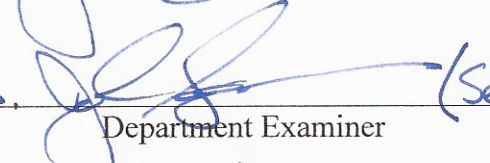
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## Introduction

Memory is never shaped in a vacuum; the motives of memory are never pure.<sup>1</sup>

James E. Young

Identity without memory is empty, memory without identity is meaningless.<sup>2</sup>

Robert Eaglestone

When I visited the former Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp near Berlin for the first time, I very quickly realized that I was not fully prepared for what I saw. I expected to see victim-centric exhibits that told the story of those that were persecuted in the camp as well as interplay between authentic relics of the Holocaust era and representative works that collaborated to narrate the history of the place. I was prepared for a great deal of sorrow and suffering to characterize the tone of memory at Sachsenhausen. I did not anticipate, however, that I would encounter a massive East German monument to communist victory standing in the center of the former *Konzentrationslager Sachsenhausen (Sachsenhausen-KZ)*.

This monument countered the expectations I had about Holocaust memory at this former Concentration Camp. The narrative was notably anti-sorrow, and anti-suffering. The story of the prisoners that had been interned here was one of heroism, strength, and triumph. The prisoners did not agonize in this story; they conquered fascism with heads held high. As I stood in the space and reflected on the piece, it did not take long to make sense of the monument and realize that its placement and grandeur made perfect sense in historical context at this place. This was not only the closest concentration camp to

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<sup>1</sup> James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 2.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Eaglestone, *The Holocaust and the Postmodern* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 75.

Berlin — the *Reichshauptstadt* in the Nazi era — but it was also the closest former concentration camp to the new capital of East Germany (German Democratic Republic, GDR) after 1949.

Sachsenhausen, in many ways, can be seen as a microcosm of German memory and its inextricable relationship with state identity since the mid-twentieth century. In 1961 the GDR opened the Sachsenhausen National Memorial, and it became a place unlike any other in East Germany to proclaim victory of communism over fascism and validate the new German state via a strong centralized narrative. With the fall of the Berlin Wall and German reunification, the site decentralized the memory narrative and made sweeping changes to the old GDR methodology at the memorial. The post-communist decentralized concept — where no single memory narrative is dominant over another — no longer serves to dictate the state identity as was practiced in the GDR, but is indeed a reflection of it. Unlike other memory sites where old narratives are buried in lieu of projecting a new memory regime, many of the GDR era relics remain among several newer exhibits in the memorial space, creating a memorial that is not without debate, but indeed introspective of a contemporary Germany still attempting to come to terms with its National Socialist and Communist pasts. The site is now imbued with “layers of memory,” and with regard to space within the memorial arena, visitors are free to explore whichever layer appeals to them.<sup>3</sup>

This project will explore the relationship between memory and German state identity by examining memorialization at Sachsenhausen from the GDR era to the present

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<sup>3</sup> I use the phrase “layers of memory” to describe both the physical elements from distinct eras at the camp maintained in the same memory space, but also their memory narratives, which also may be varied and overlapping. The layers are all within common memory space, but accessed selectively by individuals, which the section “The Visitor in the Arena” of this thesis addresses.

day. This is best accomplished by examining the site in two major time periods: the GDR and post-communist Germany. Monuments and exhibits at the site in each period will be described in detail, with particular attention to their placement in the memorial, and how they are used to complement the overall memory narrative at the site during the appropriate time period. Though it is impossible to remove all subjectivity from a project like this, I aim to show as unbiased as possible the methods the site used to project a nationalist memory on the visitor in the GDR era, and now is used to reflect a national German memory as complex as the events that took place at the site. Once communism in Germany ended, the memory of two disparate nations with incongruent pasts, ideas, and expectations collided in the void the Berlin Wall left behind. Twenty-Five years later, the discussions that arose in the wake of the collapse are no closer to being settled than they were on November 9, 1989. The section on post-communist memory will address this “collision” and how the *Wende* brought more questions than answers. That the memorial at Sachsenhausen has done the same — complicating memory rather than simplifying it — casts itself in an image of the German memory debate since reunification.

Attention will also be given to the individual in the memory space. Ultimately, it is the visitor that takes part in the memory work at the site and joins the dialogue, much as my personal experiences have encouraged me to, that keep the memory of the place alive. Even more important than written reflections like this one are the personal contributions of individual memory at the site. For all the intention that governments and the curators of memory sites can put into a memory space to tell a certain story, visitors

can alter the memoryscape and make the narrative all their own, even against the assumed objective of an exhibit or monument.

The ability of individuals to confront memory outside of a specific agenda goes against what Maurice Halbwachs argued in his landmark work *On Collective Memory*. Halbwachs argued that memory was dependent upon the framework of a person's group in society, and that this group memory existed alongside the memory of individuals, but also influenced individual memory in turn.<sup>4</sup> While individual contributions disagree with this theory, at least in part, this philosophy is reflected quite well in the GDR projection of memory at Sachsenhausen. In an inversion of the theory to practice model, the GDR constructed a common nationalist narrative of the Holocaust framed by resistance against the fascists, hoping to achieve the theory that Halbwachs had laid out, to develop a common past where one previously did not exist. In principle, if all members were of the same communist class in East Germany, this memory system should work as a collective memory of the Holocaust for East Germans. However, even during the GDR, there was no genuine collective memory of the Holocaust, as groups pressed to tell their story at the site in ways they believed that the GDR did not.

At present day Sachsenhausen, the decentralized concept promotes something more akin to what James Young calls "collected memory" as opposed to Halbwachs "collective memory."<sup>5</sup> At the memory site, many different narratives exist, and though visitors may feel attached to an individual exhibit based on their group identity, they are certainly not bound to this concept, and the site does not promote an overarching collective memory that visitors feel obligated to accept. While the GDR era may have

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<sup>4</sup> Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, ed., Lewis A. Coser, trans. Lewis A. Coser (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 167-189.

<sup>5</sup> Young, *Texture of Memory*, xi.

constructed a Halbwachsian collective memory at the site, as it stands today, the site is better represented by Young's theory of collected memories, often in conflict, but each one as important as the last, coming together in the common memorial space. Given the importance that James Young bestows on the individual in *The Texture of Memory*, and the significance of the visitor proposed in this thesis, it is natural that this writing is greatly in agreement with Young's collected memory theory.

It is this collection of memories — these layers of memory — encouraged by the decentralized concept, that promote relevant and important memory progress at Sachsenhausen. Individuals may enter the memory space and engage with any number of diverse narratives. Though they are influenced by their expectations, they are not bound to them, or any overarching narrative at the site today, as it was in the GDR. They encounter a diverse and complex memoryscape as varied as the debate about contemporary German identity itself, reflected in the post-communist memorial work at *Gedenkstätte-Sachsenhausen*.

### **Developments at Sachsenhausen in the German Democratic Republic**

Eternally it will be a place for the prosecution against war and fascism, a place of loathing of a policy and a state doctrine that had misanthropy, international and racial hatred written on its banner. Eternally it is also a place of remembrance of our comrades from many nations who lost their lives here because they defended the freedom and dignity of their people. We will never forget our fallen comrades whose ashes covered this terrain and their blood soaked the earth.<sup>6</sup>

Horst Sindermann - 1980  
Member of the Politbüro of the Central Committee of the SED  
And President of the Parliament of the GDR

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<sup>6</sup> Horst Sindermann, Speech, Sachsenhausen National Memorial – German Democratic Republic, April 19, 1980.

In April 1961, 16 years after the Soviet Red Army liberated the camp, the Sachsenhausen national memorial opened its doors to the public. The moment was a crucial one for the GDR: the Eichmann trial was prominent in media coverage, the wall dividing Berlin had only recently been erected, and thousands of East Germans were taking refuge in the West.<sup>7</sup> The East German government used the opportunity to build a case for the new German state as the superior one. The memorial would serve as a declaration of victory over fascism, but also deride what they viewed as the logical successor of the Nazi regime — the “imperial” West Germany. The memorial was the third of its kind to open in the GDR; conversely, the West Germans did not open their first memorial at Dachau until 1965.<sup>8</sup> Over 100,000 people attended the opening of the Sachsenhausen national memorial, but the event was scarcely covered by the West German media, and when they did mention Sachsenhausen, they often compared the victims of Nazism to those in Soviet camps.<sup>9</sup> Six million East German marks had been donated by the GDR population for the memorial,<sup>10</sup> and in anticipation of the opening, the Oranienburg train station was remodeled and updated. Citizens of the town were asked to beautify their homes and given government funds to do so if they requested them. An honor guard of Free German Youth lined the streets all the way from the train station to the camp. East German President Walter Ulbricht had high hopes that an event like this could show the world that he did not want a divided Germany, and that the only way to bring peace and prosperity to a reunited nation was to do so together under the Socialist Unity Party

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<sup>7</sup> Gedenkstätte Sachsenhausen, “Sachsenhausen National Memorial: The State Opening,” accessed May 7, 2015, <http://www.stiftung-bg.de/gums/en/>.

<sup>8</sup> Bill Niven, *Facing the Nazi Past: United Germany and the Legacy of the Third Reich* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 18.

<sup>9</sup> Gedenkstätte Sachsenhausen Website.

<sup>10</sup> Caroline Wiedmer, *The Claims of Memory: Representations of the Holocaust in Contemporary Germany and France* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2004), 178.



(SED).<sup>11</sup> These nationalist overtones would dominate the memorial at Sachsenhausen until the end of communism in Germany in 1990. The monuments left behind remain steadfast as immovable narrators of Holocaust memory at the site during the GDR.

Günter Morsch, the current director of the Sachsenhausen memorial site, has ensured the memorials at the camp are presented in a decentralized concept so that one theme is not dominant over the others in the present day conceptualization of memory at Sachsenhausen, yet without question the most imposing monument at the site is from the GDR era — visible before even reaching the camp. The *Tower of Nations* stands 140 meters tall and looms above all other structures at the site. While not the only remaining remnant of GDR era Holocaust memory at Sachsenhausen, it is certainly the most commanding. Whereas Morsch has worked toward a decentralized concept at the site in post-communist Germany, in the former GDR the site was to relay a single central and dominant narrative to visitors. Emphasized above all was the victory of communism over fascism.

This is not overly surprising, as the officials of the GDR were trying to establish the new Germany as “the better Germany,” and that following the liberation of the camp by Red Army and Polish troops, the camp was under communist influence. Only a few months after liberation the Red Army converted *Sachsenhausen-KZ* to Soviet Special Camp NKVD No. 7 (later, NKVD No. 1). After the foundation of the GDR in 1949, the Soviets turned control of the camp over to the East Germans in 1950, at which time it fell into disrepair and was subjected to military use and partial demolition by the Militarized Peoples Police (KVP) and later the National People’s Army (NVA). After custody of the camp was transferred to the SED in 1953, they began working toward organizing and

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 186-187.

opening commemoration sites at Sachsenhausen, Buchenwald, and Ravensbrück, which would become the first national memorials to the Holocaust in the GDR.<sup>12</sup>

By 1955, the GDR had established a “Board of Curators for the Building of National Memorial Sites at Buchenwald, Sachsenhausen, and Ravensbrück,” and by 1961, the year the memorial at Sachsenhausen opened, a law was passed dedicating these camps as “National Sites of Admonition and Remembrance.” While West Germany and indeed all of postwar Europe struggled with how to define and remember the Nazi terror in terms of national identity, the GDR wasted no time. The sites were perfect for building the national identity of a country and ideology that had “no previously accepted physical, cultural, or linguistic boundaries.”<sup>13</sup> In the wake of the Reichstag fire, Hitler’s SA Stormtroopers had set up the first camps in Germany in 1933, for which communists and socialists disproportionately took the brunt of the blame via the indictments of Adolf Hitler. Thereafter, the first internments in the Reich occurred within the borders of Germany, as those on the political far left filled the billets in these first camps.<sup>14</sup>

The narrative of the new German communist state began at the camps. This was the representative “common past” of a place that rejected the traditional German past that the Nazis so endearingly embraced and included in their reign. According to GDR ideology, the persecuted were singled out for political reasons alone, and the sites in the postwar era would be reclaimed to close the loop and tell the story of the class struggle that brought the communists victory and crushed the fascists at long last. From the very formation of the GDR, the camps were to be employed as “political weapons” against the

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 177.

<sup>13</sup> Sarah Farmer, “Symbols That Face Two Ways: Commemorating the Victims of Nazism and Stalinism at Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen,” *Representations* 49 (1995): 99, accessed May 5, 2015, doi: 2928751.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) and would represent the “purged, anti-fascist part of Germany.”<sup>15</sup> They would also dignify the GDR’s self-assertions as “the better Germany.” Sachsenhausen, the former zenith of the concentration camp system,<sup>16</sup> would tell the story of the new state and the reclamation of the site would allow the GDR to proclaim victory — an archetypal replanting of the flag in the soil where the class struggle of the communists against the fascists both began and came to an end upon liberation by the Eastern Allied forces.

Analysis of early GDR era monuments and exhibits brings clarity and definition to the memory of the Holocaust at Sachsenhausen in the period from 1961 to 1990. The *Tower of Nations* as well as *Liberation* by Rene Graetz and Waldemar Grzimek’s *Pietà* still stand today, as monuments to the past of GDR era memory. Elements of two other exhibits at the memorial site — “Museum of the European Nations’ Anti-Fascist Struggle for Freedom,” and the “Museum of the Resistance and Suffering of the Jewish People” — have been radically altered or completely removed in the post-communist era, but their inception, creation, and narrative are well documented and can be deconstructed and recounted as a crucial facet to Holocaust memory at Sachsenhausen in East Germany. Through these examples and the use of space, including physical location of the exhibits, the message they portray and the decision for their inclusion into the original national memorial, the political message of the GDR, and the role of the victim in the narrative can be examined.

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<sup>15</sup> Astrid Ley, “Remembering Nazi Crimes Ideologically: East and West German Exhibits at Sachsenhausen Memorial,” in *Berlin Since the Wall’s End: Shaping Society in the German Metropolis since 1989*, ed. John A. Williams (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2008), 111.

<sup>16</sup> The camp became the headquarters for the SS-Deaths Head units and the Inspectorate of all Concentration Camps in the Reich. Heinrich Himmler viewed Sachsenhausen as the ideal modern Concentration Camp. For more on this see: Günter Morsch and Astrid Ley, eds., *Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp 1936-1945: Events and Developments* (Berlin: Metropol, 2013), 182-183.

The arresting *Tower of Nations*, diametrically opposed to the camp's main entrance — Tower A — was the deliberate focal point of the site and impossible to ignore by visitors as they passed through the camp gates. If the hulking obelisk was not enough to draw attention on its own, as one moved through the camp entrance which offered no peripheral vision and would encourage the viewer to look straight ahead, there was a semi-circular wall built around the former roll call area, with a single opening where the *Tower of Nations* stood in the foreground. Adding to this effect were two large trees between the wall and the monument, one on the left, and one on the right. From the camp entrance the effect was a sort of tunnel vision, like staring through the viewfinder of a camera that can only photograph a single image. If the massive column were not commanding attention on its own, this single photograph would ensure it was acknowledged by any and all who passed through the gates.<sup>17</sup>

Though the first choice of the former prisoner committee that was consulted for the initial memorial at the site was to reconstruct the prisoner barracks and recreate the camp as it was under Nazi supervision, the *Tower of Nations* was the respectable concession in the form of a monument that commemorated the survivors stout endurance instead of their anguish. The monument stands at 140-meters tall — a full 20 meters above the top of Tower A — and the end product met the needs of both the survivors and the state organizers of the memorial. The memorial represents an “antithesis of the Nazi architecture of the camp” and a “design in which the triumph of anti-fascism could be made visible.”<sup>18</sup> At the top of each of the three sides of the obelisk are 18 red triangles; similar to the ones political prisoners were forced to wear on their uniforms to designate

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<sup>17</sup> See Appendix A: Figure 1 and 2 for Photographs of the Tower of Nations and the camp entrance constructed in the GDR era.

<sup>18</sup> Wiedmer, *Claims of Memory*, 180.

their identities in the camps. This arrangement of triangles suggests the multinational political prisoner population at the camp. This representation speaks to the importance of international unity — a cornerstone of communist ideology — but lacks regard for any victim groups that were persecuted so harshly at the camps. There is no implied or overt reference to Jews, Sinti or Roma, homosexuals, Slavs, women, or Jehovah's Witnesses, though all of these groups suffered explicit mass murders in the camp at Sachsenhausen based singularly on these identities.<sup>19</sup> Indeed, many of these captives may have been Communists, but unless they identified as such, they were excluded from memory at the *Tower of Nations*.

Before the memorial opened in 1961, Rene Graetz's *Liberation* was added to the site, directly in front of the *Tower of Nations*.<sup>20</sup> To the initial visitors, and to those that still walk the grounds of Sachsenhausen today, the pieces are paired so well that without some research, it would appear they are part of the same work of art. *Liberation* adds to the international communist appeal that was already supposed by the *Tower of Nations*. The sculpture consists of three figures standing atop a stone block. Inscribed on the face of the block are the countries from which prisoners at the camp came from, serving as a written representation of the implied meaning of the red triangles on the obelisk. Certainly, the communist struggle was important to the GDR as a defining point in the shaping of a new national identity. The ideological and moral victory of the communists that had recently chased fascism from not only the borders of Germany, but also the entire the European continent, was evidence of the greater good that was important to highlight in the GDR.

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<sup>19</sup> Günter Morsch, ed., *Murder and Mass Murder in Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp* (Berlin: Metropol, 2005), 78-214.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 182.

As Caroline Wiedmer puts it, Sachsenhausen was unique from Buchenwald in the sense that the “correct side” — the Soviet Red Army — were the liberators, and this fact would allow the associative narrative of victory and liberation to coexist sensibly.<sup>21</sup>

Although the camp at Ravensbrück was liberated by the Soviets as well and was also a national memorial, it was a women’s camp in Nazi Germany. This meant that feminine identity of the camp would not fit with the GDR’s masculine communist victory narrative.<sup>22</sup>

Graetz’s work would express this association of victory and liberation in the figurative narrow viewfinder at the center focal point of the camp, in conjunction with the *Tower of Nations*. The three figures on top of the block dwarf even adult humans. The grouping consists of a Soviet soldier standing behind two liberated prisoners, his hand on the shoulder of one prisoner and around the back of the other. Both prisoners stand tall, chest out and shoulders forward, sloped muscularly from the neck down. All three men face out with their heads and chins up, an expression of determination on their faces. The man on the right clenches his fist tightly held down at his side, giving way to strong forearms. The memorial does not speak of the suffering, indignity, destruction, or the horror of the Holocaust, or the atrocities that occurred here. These are not men the liberating forces would encounter after years of struggling to survive in a brutal Nazi camp, and likewise the Red Army soldier looks as if years of battle on the Eastern front were not as taxing as the accounts suggest.<sup>23</sup> The setting projects strength, heroism, determination, and victory.

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Rudy Koshar, *From Monuments to Traces: Artifacts of German Memory, 1870-1990*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 216-218.

<sup>23</sup> See Appendix A: Figure 3 for a photograph of *Liberation*.

Graetz's work was not without significant revisions before this final product would be chosen as the one to represent the message of Holocaust remembrance in the GDR. Survivor groups were dissatisfied with Graetz's initial portrayal of the prisoners at liberation. The two inmates were overly dejected and too frail, and the perceived interaction with the liberating Soviet soldier was not effective either. They called for stronger and bolder prisoner statues that had persevered over the fascists, and a relationship akin to brothers-in-arms as they stood with their Red Army liberator. GDR President Otto Grotewohl himself would not approve the final design of the statue cluster until Graetz made the legs of the soldier appear stronger. The final design, once the authorities constructing the narrative at the site had granted approval, featured three men who were ready to "shoulder this interpretation of history."<sup>24</sup>

While the *Tower of Nations* and *Liberation* were devoid of any evidence of suffering, Waldemar Grzimek's *Pietá*, built in the area of the camp formerly known as Station Z, where many of the camp executions were carried out, offers the visitor a portrayal of some of the travail and inhumanity that the camp would impose on its inmates in the Nazi era. The figures are notably more skeletal in nature, a much truer representation of what inmates would have looked like after significant time in the camp. Station Z is a relevant place for mourning, and the statue group reflects this, but allowed for a distinct and deliberate division between areas of celebration and sorrow at the memorial site. Two of the prisoners are helping a fallen comrade, carrying him in a blanket. The bronze cluster still speaks to the GDR message of camaraderie, but in a more subdued and less overtly nationalist tone.

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<sup>24</sup> Wiedmer, *Claims of Memory*, 182-184.

Grzimek's *Pietá* is not, however, without its limitations on historical representations. Though all the figures clearly are prisoners, and do depict a more historically accurate prisoner representation than those in *Liberation*, the man in the rear of the cluster, though wearing a look of grief on his face, stands tall, gaze fixed on a far off point, chest out and prideful.<sup>25</sup> This is in contrast with many traditional representations of *Pietá* in which Mary is shown cradling the dead body of Jesus. Generally, the *Pietá* form is undeniably sorrowful. Mary has her head down, or tilted slightly up in supplication, and does not evoke any sense of physical strength or pride. Grzimek's *Pietá* represents quite a different take on the classic form.

Like the *Tower of Nations* and *Liberation*, this group also lacks any identifiers of specific sufferers at the site, including women, even given the role of Mary in traditional forms of *Pietá*. While Sachsenhausen had a large number of women prisoners, common thought at the time was that women were imprisoned only at Ravensbrück and would be commemorated there in their own memorial.<sup>26</sup> The memorial at Ravensbrück tells a much different story than that at Sachsenhausen, reflecting the notion in the GDR that men were heroes and women "persevered."<sup>27</sup>

While the disturbing past of Station Z, where the camp's execution trench, gas chamber, and crematoria was located, makes it especially suitable as an area of mourning, the separation of the two memorials into respective areas of prescribed memory led to some complicated issues in the time of the GDR at the camp. First, the wall between the protective custody camp and Station Z was torn down. This gave the illusion to the visitor that those in the camp knew of the horrible actions that took place beyond the west

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<sup>25</sup> See Appendix A: Figure 4 for a Photograph of *Pietá*.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 184-185.

<sup>27</sup> Koshar, *From Monuments To Traces*, 218.



wall of the triangle.<sup>28</sup> Certainly, the actions were not secret to every member in the camp, as some prisoners worked in the crematoriums and morgues in Station Z, and if the winds were easterly, the sound of gunshots could not always be fully muffled, nor the smoke from the chimneys completely concealed. However, inmates were forced to speculate at times, and most were not in direct witness to the abject massacre that took place routinely just out of sight and sound.

Second, the creation of separate areas specifically for mourning and celebration reinforced the singular attitude portrayed at Sachsenhausen by the GDR. This use of physical space, placed the triumph at the front and center of memory at Sachsenhausen, while the conversation about suffering and mourning was quite literally pushed to the periphery. *Pietà*, (pity in Italian) was a secondary thought.

Also on the boundary, but adding to the overall message of international unity in the victory over the fascists, was the “Museum of the European Nations’ Anti-Fascist Struggle for Freedom.” Built outside the protective custody camp, near Tower A, the museum contained absolutely no information about the events that took place at Sachsenhausen, but instead detailed the political and armed battles of each European nation against the National Socialists. The museum succinctly addressed a national pride in each country’s role in the victory, while promoting a sense of international European unity against the ills of fascism.<sup>29</sup> Again, individual victim groups were not emphasized unless they also happened to be communists. Despite being the primary target of the Final Solution and suffering the worst losses during Holocaust of any victim groups, the omission of the Jews from the museum was noticeable. The anti-Israel stance of the

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<sup>28</sup> Morsch and Ley, *Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp 1936-1945*, 176.

<sup>29</sup> Ley, *Remembering Nazi Crimes Ideologically*, 111-112.

GDR disavowed the notion of including Israel in the museum, and in the new Jewish state where hundreds of thousands of Jews had taken refuge in throngs during and after the war, the absence of their role and the opportunity to tell their story was agitating to the international Jewish community. This arrangement brought new concerns about “The Jewish Question” in the new German East.

Even within a mere 4 months of the memorial’s scheduled opening in 1961, it seemed as if the Jews might not have a place in the story of Sachsenhausen at all. Fierce protest by Israeli survivor groups eventually moved the GDR to give the Jews a role in the narrative and a place to tell their part of the story. Again, the GDR accepted outside influence to address memory at the site, albeit coerced. While they were not as cooperative with those concerned about the Jewish omissions as they were with the anti-fascist survivor groups, it is clear that the GDR was not inflexibly proclaiming a narrative from the high ranks of government either. The former Barrack 38, in “the small camp” where Jews were housed during their internment at Sachsenhausen, became “The Museum of Resistance and Suffering of the Jewish People.” Created in just a few weeks’ time, it would open the same day as the rest of the national memorial.<sup>30</sup>

The narrative within the Jewish Museum at the site, by and large, supported the GDR ideology. Main themes included the solidarity of Jewish and communist inmates and Jewish revolts against the SS in the camp. As the name suggests, resistance was a crucial theme of the exhibit. Omitted were details of daily Jewish life at Sachsenhausen, how many Jews had been incarcerated there, and the specific and focused horrors the Jews were subjected to based on their identity. Mention of the deportation of Jews to

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 112.

extermination camps in the East was only implicitly addressed.<sup>31</sup> The Jews, according to Günter Morsch, “were once again marginalized.”<sup>32</sup> However, the memorial did address the genocide of the European Jewry, which was previously completely neglected in GDR memory work. With the exception of the death camps, this was likely the first time the issue was addressed in a museum setting in all of communist Eastern Europe. However scant the recollections were, the fact that Sachsenhausen was the first place a European communist country acknowledged a broader picture of the genocide of the European Jewry is significant.<sup>33</sup>

These monuments and exhibits did not simply stand as agents of memory for those that happened to visit the site out of sheer interest alone. The site lived up to the inauguration wishes of the planners and the opening ceremony attendees as a landmark of national identity and interest. The GDR frequently held rallies, speeches and events at the site, to further distance themselves from the Nazi past, distinguish their aims from those of the FRG as true and righteous, and solidify the narrative of East Germany as the peaceful Germany. The military attended these ceremonies as well, and young men conscripted into service were even sworn into the ranks as they recited the oath for workers’ and peasants’ power in front of the obelisk.<sup>34</sup> The monolith became regarded as a national — and international — symbol of unity, featured in pamphlets, photographs, and even commemorative postage stamps in the GDR, celebrating the NVA, the GDR,

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid, 112-113.

<sup>32</sup> Wiedmer, *Claims of Memory*, 187.

<sup>33</sup> Ley, *Remembering Nazi Crimes Ideologically*, 113.

<sup>34</sup> Horst Sturm, “Swearing in of NVA soldiers at Sachsenhausen,” *German Archives*. accessed April 19, 2015, [http://www.bild.bundesarchiv.de/cross-search/search/\\_1424127963/?search\[view\]=detail&search\[focus\]=1](http://www.bild.bundesarchiv.de/cross-search/search/_1424127963/?search[view]=detail&search[focus]=1)  
See Appendix A: Figure 5 for a photo of NVA soldiers swearing in at the obelisk.

and transnational harmony.<sup>35</sup> Sachsenhausen was central to the national identity of the GDR, reinventing the identity and importance that was bestowed upon the site by the National Socialists as the ideal concentration camp.

### **Holocaust Memory at Sachsenhausen in the German Democratic Republic**

Through a carefully crafted central narrative the German Democratic Republic was able to construct a neat spatialization of Holocaust memory at Sachsenhausen, one that would overcome the Nazi past of the place and simultaneously instill a new national identity for the nascent East German state. While the memorialization and memory narrative of the site was not without flaws — notably the downplaying of the horrors suffered there and the exclusion of victim groups — these flaws were not oversights, but deliberate in fashioning a focused story of the past to the people of East Germany and the world. Architecturally, artistically, and ideologically, the site was designed to defeat the Nazi past, allowing space for both victory and mourning, and place emphasis on the future, without ever completely straying from the primary political narrative the GDR wanted to project.

Architecturally, the site subdued what Günter Morsch calls the Nazi “geometry of terror.”<sup>36</sup> Many of the Nazi era buildings were torn down or refashioned. In the space left over, the hulking *Tower of Nations* was built, taller than the center of Nazi terror that was Tower A, with a mounted machine gun that could fire anywhere into the protective custody camp and the cynical *Arbeit Macht Frei* inscribed in the ironwork of the gate. As the obelisk drew visitors inward through the narrow viewfinder of the semi-circular

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<sup>35</sup> See Appendix A: Figure 6 for a Photograph of a GDR Commemorative Stamp.

<sup>36</sup> Morsch and Ley, *Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp 1936-1945*, 186-187.

wall, they quite literally stood with their backs turned on the Nazi past. The wall between the camp and Station Z was removed, allowing for separate areas of victory and mourning, but uniting the memorial within the camp gates into one central space where the narrative would prevail. Even in sadness while visiting Station Z, visitors could see the towering victory monument unobstructed in the middle of the camp. The message of triumph would never be a secondary observation.

If Tower A was the central point around which the Nazi geometry of terror was organized and culled its strength, the GDR would cut away the Nazi ideology from the heart outwards. The *Tower of Nations* would be architecturally, visibly, and ideologically dominant, and dissolve the fear and strength that architect Bernard Kuiper built into what he called Germany's "finest" concentration camp.<sup>37</sup> The obelisk would draw attention forward into the camp. Where prisoners once stood three times a day at roll call in the shadow of Tower A and its omnipresent gun, visitors now would marvel at the *Tower of Nations*, Nazi fear and trepidation exactly 180 degrees behind them. The most central component of Nazi terror in the camp was now reduced to hindsight.

*Pietà*, the statue group at Station Z, would comment on the death and suffering in the camp, but even here the men in the depiction would not show too many signs of weakness. The KVP had destroyed the L-shaped building that housed a specialized neck-shot facility, gas chamber, and crematoria at Station Z in 1952 and 1953 for reasons that were not documented, leaving only ruins of the building.<sup>38</sup> The execution trench, *Pietà* and a concrete roof over the bronze cluster were the only things remaining in the space

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<sup>37</sup> Morsch and Ley, *Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp 1936-1945*, 186.

<sup>38</sup> Morsch, *Murder and Mass Murder*, 44.

where tens of thousands were murdered. The Nazis had murdered fellow communists here, but this was a side note to the fundamental message of communist triumph.

The GDR narrative of the Holocaust at Sachsenhausen was for all intentions a politically driven and unforgivingly narrow one. Emphasized were class struggle, heroism, and strength, and unquestionable victory. Unity was at the core of the narrative as well, providing that it was underpinned by communist comradeship. International coherence was stressed also; the legitimization of the GDR was necessary to fit within the socialist framework of class struggle throughout Europe and secure its place in the global context as being on the “right” side of history. Discouraged, or in many cases, outright omitted, were suffering, indications of weakness, and the victimization of individual groups that were persecuted for any reason other than political means. Even the stories of Jews and Slavs exterminated strictly in accordance with Nazi racial policy were heavily downplayed or ignored in the first national memorial at Sachsenhausen.

However, this was not one totalitarian regime being replaced by another to “brainwash” a generation into believing what the top governmental officials of the day wanted them to without exception. Certainly, the GDR had a political agenda, but they were in consultation with survivors’ groups regarding the decisions made at Sachsenhausen. It is true that most, if not all of the groups that the GDR actively consulted were exclusively anti-fascist and had political agendas in line with the GDR. However, they were former prisoners — *survivors* — who had lived the horrible experience and wanted a say in how their story was told, and these decisions were theirs in large part.

It cannot be overlooked that the staggering majority of inmates at Sachsenhausen in December 1939 were political prisoners that were imprisoned for their beliefs and actions that came into conflict with National Socialism. Even as late as April 1943, political prisoners still maintained a majority of the prison population, with Soviet slave laborers a close second, perhaps better regarded as brothers-in arms.<sup>39</sup> These opponents that challenged the extreme right philosophy of the Nazis were likely Communists, Socialists, or at the most moderate, Social Democrats. Regardless, they were all members of the political left who suffered at the camp en masse. The narrative of Holocaust memory at Sachsenhausen was unilateral and selective, however, the narrative was not simply a created one meant solely to manipulate a populace into believing a message that was completely unfounded. Thousands of members of the political resistance *did* experience the Nazi nightmare at Sachsenhausen and were instrumental in creating the national narrative of the GDR in conjunction with the early government.

Sachsenhausen, the former heart of the SS Concentration Camp system, was now a symbol of international collaboration and unity in peace, at least in rhetoric. Where a handful of the most heinous Nazi murderers trained their hand in killing — including the self-proclaimed “greatest destroyer of human beings” and commandant of Auschwitz, Rudolph Höss<sup>40</sup> — the GDR was swearing in hundreds of soldiers of the NVA loyal to the party of workers and peasants, publically at least. The memorial now stood for national pride in the GDR and would be used as an instrument for reaffirming state significance in the years of communism in East Germany. Completely omitted were the times as a Soviet Special Camp, and Holocaust victim groups that were not excluded

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<sup>39</sup> Morsch and Ley, *Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp 1936-1945*, 70-71, 133.

<sup>40</sup> Rudolph Höss, *Death Dealer: Memoirs of the SS Kommandant at Auschwitz.*, ed., Steven Paskuly, trans. Andrew Pollinger (Amherst: New York, 1992), 189.

were selectively minimized at the expense of the national dictum. After the Berlin wall came down in 1989 and the official reunification of Germany in 1990, this would no longer be the case. It would not take long for the narratives at the site to begin to shift dramatically.

### **Post-Communist Developments at Sachsenhausen**

An ‘ideal’ concentration camp memorial site might be one in which the whole topography is visible, where there is detailed documentation of the history of the camp, where there is comprehensive scope for commemoration, and where bias and idealization are replaced by a respect for complexities and multiple narratives.<sup>41</sup>

Bill Niven

The memorial site at Sachsenhausen today reflects a much broader story of the camp than during the time of the GDR. Decentralization has not only allowed, but also promoted a wider and more historically inclusive account that “reflects the inherent polylocality and multi-narrative of camp life.”<sup>42</sup> The concept of victimhood is extensively expanded and reflected in the current exhibitions at the site. Included is not only commemoration of Jewish victims, but Sinti and Roma, homosexuals, Soviet and Allied prisoners-of-war, and prisoners of all nationalities interred at the camp, among others. This also includes Germans, during both the Nazi era and with expected controversy, during the Soviet period. The expansion of the memorial site does not only contain a more accurate portrayal of victims at the site, but also incorporates exhibits on the Nazi perpetrators, medical care and crime, the prison cell block, and the relationship between the town of Oranienburg and the camp, to name several. Sachsenhausen became the first

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<sup>41</sup> Niven, *Facing the Nazi Past*, 39.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 38



concentration camp to critically comment upon its own planning and inception as a memorial site during the time of the GDR, with the exhibit “From Memory to Monument.”<sup>43</sup> This ensures that the “history of memory” is also included at the site, and that commentary does not end in 1945 or 1950 (when the Soviet Special Camp Closed), but that the process of memorialization itself becomes a narrative at the site via the decentralized concept. As director Günter Morsch puts it, “the historical site *sui generis* does not exist but is to be approached as an amalgamate of historical processes.”<sup>44</sup>

With this in mind, it is expected and fitting that all relics of GDR era memory at Sachsenhausen were not torn down and the site reconstructed as if untouched since liberation in 1945. Changes have inevitably been made since 1990; nothing at the site stands exactly as it did in 1961, and indeed some narratives that were too limiting have been completely removed, or perhaps expanded to include a more comprehensive account. However, the memorial work of the GDR is maintained in the decentralized concept and has a part in the current memory dialogue at the site.

The *Tower of Nations* and *Liberation* stand as colossal as ever in the center of the camp grounds, ever projecting pride and strength. Gone, however, is the concrete wall with its narrow viewfinder that provided the incoming visitor one single view. The monument cannot be ignored, but upon entrance to the camp, the visitor is no longer immediately confined in a brick semicircle that offered one egress, fixed forever on communist victory. Now the visitor can see the monument in the foreground, but once they pass through the entrance at Tower A and regain their peripheral vision, the considerable openness and vastness of the place replaces the claustrophobic trappings of

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<sup>43</sup> Ley and Morsch, *Sachsenhausen 1936-1945*, 190.

<sup>44</sup> Wiedmer, *Claims of Memory*, 168.

the GDR setup. They are free to choose where to go and what narratives to explore. They are not held to the victory narrative alone, though they may explore it if they choose.

Station Z has undergone significant physical and commemorative renovation. Structurally, Waldemar Grzimek's *Pietà* remains and still tells a sorrowful tale of the camp, portrayed in the styling of the GDR. However, the open air concrete roof that formerly covered the statue grouping and the ruins of the L-Building that contained the neck-shot facility, gas chambers, and morgue where mass murders were carried out, fell into grave disrepair and is no longer a fixture at the site. The new housing for the remnants of mass murder at the site and *Pietà* is a large, white, rectangular covering. The cover protects the ruins from the elements, but has an open atrium in the center, still giving the place a feel of being outdoors. *Pietà* and its portrayal of prisoner suffering remain exposed to the elements through this vestibule, presenting the figures in a more appropriate representation of what the hot summers and frigid winters would have been like for the prisoners at Sachsenhausen. While observing the ruins, visitors now look against a white backdrop in the quasi-indoor space. The ruins are brought to the forefront of the scene against this white background, and there is no distraction while examining them. In contrast, during the GDR era, visitors observing the remnants of the L-building would have had a line of sight beyond the low height of the ruins, through the space left by the removed west wall of the camp, and had a direct view of the obelisk. The central narrative would never be buried while the GDR maintained the memorial. Now, enclosed in this indoor-outdoor space visitors can appropriately experience the weight of

sorrow, or educate themselves about the worst parts of the camp history without the dominant victory narrative subjectively looming over them.

Outside the white covering the execution trench sits relatively unchanged. However, a replica of the west camp wall has been restored through an opening in which visitors gain entrance to the former station Z, now an exhibit titled, “Murder and Mass Murder at Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp.”<sup>45</sup> The obelisk is visible from here, but again, this new architecture dissuades the visitor from being dominated by its message. The monument can only be seen by looking up, to a point in the sky over the wall, it is not in the direct line of sight. Also included in Station Z are markers for mass graves of those murdered in the camp and a memorial to the murder of ten thousand Soviet prisoners-of-war, the largest mass murder to take place at *Sachsenhausen-KZ*.<sup>46</sup> Large facial photographs of some of these men bring a deep personalization to the site. The war-hardened faces show varying degrees of fear, sadness, and determination, while telling the tale of a difficult fight in the East. These are not the invincible communist warriors that stand atop the stone block in Graetz’s *Liberation*. They are human, they are victims, and they are individuals lost forever to a terrible war.

Of the GDR era relics still at the site, these are most unchanged. The principal and dominant narrative of the former East Germany is no longer the central narrative at current day *Gedenkstätte-Sachsenhausen*, but neither is it hidden, razed and built over and forgotten, or overtly criminalized. It is a fundamental part of the decentralized narrative and living memory discussion at the site.

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<sup>45</sup> See Appendix A: Figure 7 for a map detailing the present-day layout of the memorial site.

<sup>46</sup> Morsch, *Murder and Mass Murder*, 166.

The “Museum of the Peoples’ Anti-Fascist Struggle for Freedom” and the “The Museum of Resistance and Suffering of the Jewish People ” are gone and have been repurposed in a way that bears effectively no resemblance to their GDR counterparts. The “Museum of the Peoples’ Anti-Fascist Struggle for Freedom” shuttered its doors in 1990 after the message was “deemed too ideologically tainted and heroic.”<sup>47</sup> The building that housed it, now called the New Museum, contains a redesigned exhibit that opened in June of 2002. Whereas during the GDR era this building contained no information about the camp or its prisoners and was only used to discuss the political and military victories of European countries over fascism, the updated museum contains information about the years before and after the Nazi era at Sachsenhausen, and a second exhibit detailing the sites’ time as a Soviet Special camp. The aforementioned “From Memory to Monument” exhibit is located in the New Museum as well. The display offers a critical view regarding the treatment of the camp by the KVP and SED, noting the destruction of much of the original material of the site during the GDR, in order to build the primary heroic narrative on a more or less clean canvas. The reduction of state funds after reunification and the subsequent further deterioration of many of the sites relics of the Nazi and GDR eras are explained in the New Museum as well. The work of long suppressed victim groups and other activists who in the 1980s relentlessly sought to undermine the GDR “monopoly on heroism” is also shared here.<sup>48</sup>

The Jewish museum has also undergone a complete reconstruction inside and out, though this process was certainly accelerated by some disturbing circumstances. In 1992, shortly after a visit from Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, an arson attack carried out

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<sup>47</sup> Niven, *Facing The Nazi Past*, 34.

<sup>48</sup> Morsch and Ley, *Sachsenhausen 1936-1945*, 190.

by right-wing extremists completely destroyed some parts of Barrack 38 and 39 and severely damaged what wasn't burned to the ground.<sup>49</sup> The exhibit in Barrack 38 now presents a more accurate, albeit complicated narrative of the Jewish experience at Sachsenhausen and the Holocaust at large. On the right of the exhibit, slides of persecution of Jews and other victims are shown. On the left, the faces of some of the 74 individual biographies featured in detail in another part of Jewish exhibit are displayed. These are not the same individuals being shot, beaten, deported, and terrorized on the right side of the presentation, but this conflict between impersonal and personal, is crucial to the narrative of the exhibit and one of the greater challenges of Holocaust memory; the challenge of *repersonalization*. A glass case containing tattered remains of leather shoes sits between the two displays.<sup>50</sup> Bill Niven defines the critical process of *repersonalization* presented in this room:

It is hard to believe that these remains were once part of individual items with individual owners; yet their very fragmentation triggers an inchoate impulse in the viewer to want to reconstitute the pieces into a whole or wholes. Of course one cannot reconstitute disparate pieces; and the victims whose faces we can put a name to in the one set of slides are not the same people we see being brutalized in the other set. Repersonalization remains a process fraught with obstacles. What matters ultimately, is that the visitor be made aware of it as a *desirable* process.<sup>51</sup>

Gone is the monotonic narrative of the Communist Jewish resistance, and in its vacancy, a more comprehensive account of the Jewish experience at Sachsenhausen and during the Holocaust. The visitor must look beyond the impersonal imagery of six million Jewish bodies in terrible piles or burned to ashes, and confront the personal individuals, their pasts, their jobs, their families, their camp experience and ultimately, their end. As Niven says, the incongruence with the individuals and the pictures provokes an inherent

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 170-171.

<sup>50</sup> Niven, *Facing the Nazi Past*, 37.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

response to reconstitute and repair, to reconstruct and make sense of the situation. For the visitor this is an impossible frustration, but brings the reality of the Holocaust into focus. For so many Jewish and other individual victims of the Holocaust, there was not and never will be a reconstitution. The pieces will never fit together again.

Although the past of the Holocaust cannot fully be reconciled, the exhibit poignantly attempts to remind the visitor that there is hope for reconciliation in the present, and indeed the future. Evidence that the hatred of Nazi racial policy did not pass with the fall of the Reich are built into the physical construction of the Jewish exhibit and stand as a reminder of “how destructive the desire to forget or repress can be.”<sup>52</sup> Burned portions of the barracks were included in the reconstruction of the buildings, contained behind a glass dividing wall, visible substantiation of the dangers that extremism still projects in the present world. Though this was a second reconstruction of the barracks, the first being in 1961 to house the GDR Jewish museum, the barracks have been reconstructed as close to original form as possible. This is especially true of Barrack 39, which contains minimalist museum commentary to give the visitor the closest experience possible to what daily life was like in the camp.<sup>53</sup> The reconstruction to an original form a *second* time shows those responsible for acts of hatred that no matter the efforts to erase the past, they will be restored to tell of the traumatic events that took place within.

The present-day Jewish portion of the site represents a more accurate narrative to what Jewish life was like in the camp. This is one case where the GDR narrative is effectually erased. The current exhibit, particularly the two portions discussed, pose a captivating and appropriate dilemma for the visitor to the Jewish barracks at

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<sup>52</sup> Niven, *Facing the Nazi Past*, 32.

<sup>53</sup> Morsch and Ley, *Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp 1936-1945*, 172-173.

Sachsenhausen. First, the discomfort but desire to repersonalize and reconstitute the trauma of the Holocaust, and second, the discomfort and desire to comprehend and refute extremism in the present and future. The narrative the visitor encounters in the post-communist era actively intellectually aids the fight against fascism and extremism, rather than superimposing a victory narrative that declares the battle already won.

The last exhibit of the post-communist era at the site that will be discussed is the memorial to the Soviet Special Camp. The idea of commemorating the time as a Soviet Special Camp itself is fraught with complications and conflicts. For obvious political reasons, there was no mention of the use of the camp by the Soviets in the GDR memorial site. However, this is a memorial that has undergone drastic change in the post-communist era itself, and is still at the center of heated debates about memory at the site. Issues of victimhood, criminality, East vs. West ideology, watered down comparisons of totalitarian regimes, and the lingering questions of a Germany still struggling to reconcile both its National Socialist and communist past make the exhibit impossible to strike a neutral and wholly non-offensive tone.

Some of the staff employed at Sachsenhausen, in the early post-communist years, were dedicated members of the former SED, or in some cases, devoted informants of the *Stasi*. The early post-communist narrative was one that downplayed the harshness of the Soviet era at the camp, and assumed a damning stance on the prisoner population in whole. Visitors were informed of the daily routine of the prisoner and cultural events and ballets prisoners took part in were described. The exhibit lauded the work of famous German actor Heinrich George while detained, but omitted the details of his death in the Soviet Camp. The grounds that led to mass graves could be reached through an electric

turnstile, which could only be unlocked by request via intercom to camp staff. The area was not maintained in winter and was sometimes padlocked to visitors if they were inclined to wander beyond the triangular walls to visit the mass graves.<sup>54</sup> The fact that the memory space was generally inaccessible delineates the low priority of delivering an adequate Soviet Special Camp narrative in the early days of the post-communist era.

Meager as the Special Camp exhibition was, its mere inclusion in any form was enough to incite argument and debate. Roger Bordage, a French survivor of *Sachsenhausen-KZ*, was appalled after a visit to find that Germans interned in the Soviet Special Camp were also being commemorated at the site. He wrote that Sachsenhausen was a “flawed museum” and issued warnings that this arrangement would poison the memory of future generations. Bordage would have preferred to see the camp reconstructed exactly as it was during the Nazi era, confined to the atrocities strictly between 1933 and 1945, and shares the concerns of many that the equation of totalitarian regimes and memorials can appear to blend very discrete histories, and should be avoided at all cost. Bordage was insistent that every person in the Soviet Special Camp received a trial and was placed there legally for being Nazi perpetrators and deserved no memorial, but was most appalled by the memorial stone that was laid within the triangular borders of the Sachsenhausen memorial.<sup>55</sup>

In Roger Bordage’s defense, the narrative concerning who was actually imprisoned by the Soviets has somewhat changed since he first published his opinion in 1993. The camp imprisonments long had been viewed as necessary for the postwar denazification process, though in the GDR they were taboo and rarely discussed at all.

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<sup>54</sup> Niven, *Facing the Nazi Past*, 51-52.

<sup>55</sup> Roger Bordage, “Sachsenhausen: A Flawed Museum,” in *Museums and Their Communities*, ed. Sheila Watson. (New York: Routledge, 2007), 228-229, 232-233.



The records are unreliable and in many cases absent, but according to some scholars, including Bill Niven and Bettina Greiner, it is a certainty that not every prisoner was a Nazi.<sup>56</sup> According to Greiner, the Soviets condemned people to long and harsh prison sentences in two ways: imprisonment without trial or Soviet Military Tribunals. Moscow was unable or at least unwilling to establish the difference between penal and protective custody at the time. Some 60,000 people were held in the camp at Sachsenhausen alone, and it is estimated that 12,000 perished due to the horrid camp conditions.<sup>57</sup> Some of the remains uncovered in the mass graves were children and adolescents, and raised concerns about presuming that the entire camp was filled with dyed in the wool Nazis.<sup>58</sup> Although many questions of who occupied the camps and the status of victimhood remain unanswered, Greiner is careful to denote the National Socialist camps as unique in scope, ideology, genocidal, and racial terms, and not willing of equation of the Soviet Special Camps. Her thesis asserts that the Special Camps were indeed filled with political prisoners, comprised not only of former Nazis but also non-Nazi opponents of Stalin's Soviet Union.<sup>59</sup> The fact that at least *some* innocent people lost their lives in the Soviet camps remains complicated by the idea that victims of a different regime may have potentially shared a jail cell, and now a memory space, with the most infamous perpetrators of mass murder in the twentieth century remains an incredibly complex and precarious issue. Equally problematic is the idea that Nazi perpetrators may be parenthetically included in the memorial process.

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<sup>56</sup> Niven, *Facing the Nazi Past*, 43-45.

<sup>57</sup> Bettina Greiner, *Suppressed Terror: History and Perception of Soviet Special Camps in Germany*, trans., Geisteswissenschaften International (Lexington Books: Lanham Maryland, 2014), 2-4.

<sup>58</sup> Kinzer, Stephen. "Germans Find Mass Graves at an Ex-Soviet Camp." *New York Times*, September 24, 1992. <http://www.nytimes.com/1992/09/24/world/germans-find-mass-graves-at-an-ex-soviet-camp.html>.

<sup>59</sup> Greiner, *Suppressed Terror*, 347-357.

The new presentation at the site aims to bring a steadier narrative than the earlier exhibits that were overly sympathetic to the Soviets and physically misplaced, yet also not to err by creating victims out of mass murderers that were imprisoned in the postwar years. The new exhibit is located outside the triangular walls of the traditional memorial.<sup>60</sup> This use of space is dual fold: It places the part of the exhibits outside the wall where actual barracks housed prisoners during the Soviet era and it also appeases the very genuine and valid concerns of those like Roger Bordage. The Soviet Special Camp story is not located inside the triangle and therefore, not in serious danger of being misconstrued as a comparative or competitive history to the site's Nazi past, but a singular layer all its own. In fact, unless a visitor takes the long walk from the entrance at Tower A to the apex of the equilateral triangle and passes through the physical boundary where the two memoryscapes meet, they will not encounter the past of the Soviet Camp at all. It is not hidden; it but housed in barracks that were utilized in the Soviet era, yet at the furthest point from the heart of the Nazi geometry of terror. It seems a world apart from the Nazi era, an arrangement reflective of two such distinct narratives. Here it is liberated from the threat of muddling two discrete histories, or equating the Nazis and the Communists, and canceling the guilt of a complicated past.

### **The *Wende* and the Collision of Memory**

I would like to understand why, in this decade, the past is being presented as never before.<sup>61</sup>

Martin Walser, 1999

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<sup>60</sup> See Appendix: Figure 7 for location of Soviet Special Camp Museum at the present-day memorial site.

<sup>61</sup> Niven, *Facing the Nazi Past*, 1.

Commemoration is an institution of state culture in the united Germany. It is an obligation for those who are in politics.<sup>62</sup>

Jürgen Dittberner, 1999

On November 9, 1989, the Berlin wall came down. With its fall came celebrations and reunions; families that had been separated could see one another again. Those in East Berlin traveled to West Berlin and were not shot at by the sentries. From the demonstrations in Leipzig in the leading months, to the tearing down of the wall by German citizens, despite threats and heavy military buildup, there was no German version of Tiananmen Square that took place. The Germans had reclaimed and reunited their country in a peaceful revolution. Seemingly, Germany was free to reclaim her pride and resolve her past.

These events would appear to unanimously stand as the most celebrated moment in present-day German history. However, when the wall came down not only did people pass freely over its previous boundary, but ideas, emotions, and historical memory did as well. What happened could best be regarded as a collision of memory. East and West ideologies did not dissolve with when the concrete of the wall was destroyed and neither did the way that each side had dealt with the National Socialist past, including their conceptions of guilt and victimhood associated with it. For as long as Germany was divided, the Nazi past was reconciled by embracing a sense of “otherness.” From each side’s perspective, the state on the opposite side of the German-German border embodied what was wrong with Germany and should shoulder the blame for National Socialism.

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<sup>62</sup> Jürgen Dittberner, *Schwierigkeiten mit dem Gedenken: Auseinandersetzungen mit der Nationalsozialistischen Vergangenheit* (Opladen/Wiesbaden: Westdeutscher Verlag GmbH, 1999), 8.

Both were able to ideologically isolate the “other” as the natural successor to the Nazi regime and therefore minimize their own guilt.<sup>63</sup>

As evidenced by the Sachsenhausen national memorial during the GDR, the East German narrative was unambiguous. Remembering Nazi crimes was central to supporting the founding of the GDR as first and foremost an anti-fascist state. The memory was selective and specific, the victimhood streamlined, but intentional and necessary to legitimize the new East German government. By condemning the Nazi misdeeds as being primarily motivated by a greedy capitalist and boundlessly expansive agenda, they could frame the West Germans as the only logical successors to Hitler and the Nazis.

Reconciliation of the Nazi past in the FRG was not as clear or defined as in the East and at times even contradictory. Unflinchingly, the FRG focused on the totalitarian aspects of the GDR, its human rights violations, and the invasive and secretive *Stasi* to declare the GDR as the natural descendant of National Socialism. However, West Germans abnegated guilt for the Holocaust by focusing on the seduction of good and ordinary German people by the Nazis, implying they were subdued by an occupation of outsiders. Konrad Adenauer pleaded in 1946 that the Allies “finally” stop punishing the Germans, who themselves were true victims of Hitler. Yet, it was Adenauer who agreed for the FRG to pay reparations to Israel, much to the disapproval of his own party. In the 1980s, Chancellor Helmut Kohl frequently spoke of “normalizing” Germany’s Nazi

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<sup>63</sup> Niven, *Facing the Nazi Past*, 2.

past.<sup>64</sup> Recalling the tattered shoes and incongruity of photographs in the Jewish memorial at Sachsenhausen, this is not only improbable, but totally impossible.

The opacity of West German Holocaust memory peaked infamously at Bitburg in 1985. German Chancellor Helmut Kohl and American President Ronald Reagan laid a wreath at a cemetery to honor dead German soldiers in an act of international solidarity and remembrance for those lost to the war. However, there were also 49 *Waffen-SS* members buried at the cemetery in Bitburg. Despite pleas from advisors, including Elie Wiesel, Reagan chose to attend with Kohl. The image of two leaders memorializing a graveyard that contained the remains of indisputable perpetrators did not send a clear message and the international community was incensed over the perception the act portrayed.<sup>65</sup>

The result of a divided Germany allowed neither side to fully deal with the National Socialist past. Logically, after the *Wende*, the Nazi question and the collision of Holocaust memory in the negative space it left behind has further complicated this process in post-communist Germany, both sides of which are reflected in the quotes at the beginning of this section, these remarks made a decade after the end of communism in Germany. The statement by Martin Walser, an excerpt from his German peace prize acceptance speech in Frankfurt, expressed a desire to move beyond the Nazi past and rebuild the national narrative for present-day Germany around some other prideful history other than the Holocaust; a narrative David Art calls the “official memory

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<sup>64</sup> David Art, “Making Room for November 9, 1989?: The Fall of the Berlin Wall in German Politics and Memory,” in *Twenty Years After Communism: The Politics of Memory and Commemoration*, eds., Michael Bernhard and Jan Kubik. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 199-200.

<sup>65</sup> Charles S. Maier, *The Unmasterable Past: History, Holocaust, and German National Identity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 9-11.

regime” of contemporary Germany.<sup>66</sup> However shortsighted Kohl’s efforts may have been, some scholars argue this is precisely what he was trying to accomplish at Bitburg, attempting to establish a more wholesome national narrative to build pride around.<sup>67</sup> Walser was accused of revisionism and reviving anti-Semitism for some other comments in the speech deriding Auschwitz as being a “moral club” or mandatory obligation for Germans.<sup>68</sup> He may have been extreme in his remarks, but the desire to break away from the shameful narrative of the Holocaust is not lost on all Germans. Konrad Jarausch is particularly concerned about narratives that frame all Germans being victims of the Nazi past, and as much as the old generation has seemed to reject the central national narrative being Holocaust centric, he is also concerned that many young Germans have also grown weary of hearing of the Nazi crimes in the mid-twentieth century.<sup>69</sup> Jürgen Dittberner’s quote displays another facet of the German responsibility for memory. Dittberner regards memory as crucial to not only the narrative of a united Germany, but a state responsibility to see it is appropriately tended to. This treatment of memory suggests that it is crucial to state identity in post-communist Germany. It is safe to say up to the present, the reunified German state has served Dittberner’s wishes well.

A quarter century after communism in Germany there is no consensus on Holocaust memory. The wall coming down did not inspire a heroic narrative shaped around November 9, 1989. Though many scholars were concerned reunification would promote a forgetting of the Holocaust, or a totalitarian comparison between Nazism and

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<sup>66</sup> Art, *Making Room*, 196.

<sup>67</sup> Art, *Making Room*, 200.

<sup>68</sup> Niven, *Facing the Nazi Past*, 178.

<sup>69</sup> Konrad H. Jarausch, “Memory Wars: German Debates About the Legacy of Dictatorship,” in *Berlin Since the Wall’s End: Shaping Society in the German Metropolis since 1989*, ed. John A. Williams. (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2008), 97-99.

Stalinism that would service a leveling out of past guilt, the opposite effect actually took place, and this is what perplexed and troubled Martin Walser.

The 1990s were “a veritable explosion” of Holocaust discussion,<sup>70</sup> not only in Germany, but internationally as well. Scholars began to think and rethink the Holocaust in ways that had previously not been done. Christopher Browning and Jonah Goldhagen fleshed out the role of the “ordinary” German in what became competitive works. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum was conceptualized and built. Berlin’s Holocaust Memorial was planned. Schindler's List filled theaters and won several categories at the Academy Awards. The Holocaust was receiving attention in the public sphere like never before.

When the wall collapsed, the collision of memory was so intense that it caused an explosion of Holocaust dialogue. The explosion started smaller fires of discussion, awakening Holocaust discussion in the public arena, reigniting like kindle that had been stored away during the entirety of the Cold War, and dried out until it became truly eager for flame. All traces of memory were not consumed, but scattered. Forty years of life in the GDR did not disappear in thought when the wall came down, and the maladroit memory practices of the FRG did not suddenly ring true with thousands of former East Germans. David Art’s assertion of the Holocaust as the “official memory regime” may be foremost in a united Germany, but it is certainly not singular. The complicated and uncertain process of memory in Germany is still as intense as ever a quarter century after the Berlin Wall was breached, and discussion about working through these complications are vital to keeping both the Holocaust and all German postwar memory alive.

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<sup>70</sup> Niven, *Facing the Nazi Past*, 1.

Recalling then, the post-communist representations at Sachsenhausen, the relevance of the camp in the post-communist era is readily apparent. The decentralized concept, and diverse and inclusive memory work at the site, seems to deliberately reflect the diverse and elaborate memories of a complicated post-Nazi Germany. Not every memorial site can or should address the heterogenic memory experiences that Sachsenhausen does, but for all intents and purposes *Gedenkstätte-Sachsenhausen* stands as an effective representation of a complex German memory at a site with a complex German past. The visitor can stand in the memorial site, appreciate the layers of memory accrued over time and their conscious arrangement in the memorial space that contributes to the decentralization process. They can experience the complexities of German memory without being pushed headfirst towards a specific discourse. The visitors' observations, participation, and interaction at the memory site is a crucial part of keeping memory alive, and at Sachsenhausen today, the site's concept encourages the visitor to open discussion and dialogue, and does not drown out memory narratives that run afoul of a prescribed memory regime, as has happened at the site in the past.

### **The Visitor in the Arena**

Insofar as I stand within the perimeter of these memorial spaces, I become part of their performance, whether I like it or not...As I leave the space and others enter, memory in the monument changes accordingly...When I incorporate other visitors' responses into my descriptions, I acknowledge that in my sharing the memorial space with them, their responses become part of my experience, part of the total memorial text...memorials by themselves remain inert and amnesiac, dependent on visitors for whatever memory they will finally produce.<sup>71</sup>

James E. Young

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<sup>71</sup> Young, *Texture of Memory*, xii-xiii.



I saw an old lady who was a survivor from the United States. She herself was not in Auschwitz, but lost most of her family there. I saw this woman standing in front of the crematorium and approaching the oven. You could literally see something formed in her throat, how she couldn't breathe anymore. She gasped for air and then started crying. After she had cried she came closer to the ovens, touched them, looked through this hole, put her head in. She was no longer touching this oven as an instrument for murder, but touching it like a shroud, like a thing that touched the dead in their last minutes of living.<sup>72</sup>

Hanno Loewy, director of the Fritz Bauer Holocaust Institute, 1993

As implied in the quote by James Young above, there is no single actor that contributes more to, or benefits more from the memorial process than that of the individual visitor.

The designers of a memorial can have the best intentions of how to promote and represent a certain type of commemoration, but ultimately, how the public perceives the finished product and joins the conversation on the particular memory invoked by the work delineates the terms of remembrance. Governments and donors can raise millions of dollars to plan and construct a memorial work that reflects — or in the case of the GDR, projects — a desired collective narrative, but years of hard work can prove in vain if public memory dictates otherwise. Every visitor shows up with their own beliefs and expectations, but what they impart in the memory discussion in their time in the memorial, and what they take away to share (or not to share), are what really keep the memory process moving.

At Sachsenhausen, the mission of the GDR was to reclaim and restructure the place that was Sachsenhausen, and liberate it from its own past by reconstructing a singular memory on top of it. Perpetually, though perhaps not consciously, the visitor in the arena claims the site as their own and creates the memory within. The decentralized

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<sup>72</sup> Karen E. Till, *The New Berlin: Memory, Politics, Place* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 209.

concept is to be credited for forwarding this action in the case of Sachsenhausen.

Without a strict prescription on how to remember at the site, as in the GDR, the visitor is free to engage in the multiplicity of narratives at the site as they wish and set the terms for present day memory.

Equally as open-ended, the varied narratives that exist at the site do not detract from any individual participating in any memory narrative they wish to superimpose on a site that may not be “designed” for that narrative. The *Tower of Nations* and *Liberation* were intended to project a nonnegotiable narrative of communist victory forever.

However, a lit candle in a small votive, or bouquets of flowers placed on the ground in front of the monolith transforms the monument into a place of mourning. The planning that went into the strong legs of the soldier and solid chests of the men, redesigned multiple times until they would never portray signs of weakness, means nothing once visitors lay small stones amid the feet of the men. With this action the monument becomes a Jewish grave.

The woman from the passage by Hanno Loewy also transforms part of the site, in this case, at Auschwitz. For some, the thought of touching, let alone sticking their head in an oven that turned millions of terrorized souls into ash may seem disrespectful or macabre. But for this survivor, at this place where her family was turned into unidentifiable fragments, much like the shoes in the Jewish exhibit at Sachsenhausen, the oven literally became a place of connection, a place to say the goodbye she was never afforded, a place where her loved ones left this earth. She likely can never completely reconstitute or reconcile the past, but for her, this most recognizable symbol of the impersonal and industrial destruction of the European Jewry becomes a vessel for the

most personal and organic connection she could experience, and repair her fractured memory to the best of her ability.

Roger Bordage left Sachsenhausen appalled in the early post-communist era, and dutifully criticized the “flawed museum” that was Sachsenhausen. Today, he is President of the International Sachsenhausen Committee. It can be presumed that he is satisfied with the present-day representations at the site, representations that his own pen cast into effect with his dissatisfaction of memory at the camp. He saw flaws in the memory, and his contributions have helped to change the narrative.

This altered narrative — decentralized and consisting of collected memories — largely encouraged my interaction with the East German memorials at the site and served as an inspiration for this project. The collected memories enabled my encounter with all the narratives I did expect, but also those I did not. My expectations of what memory *would* be at the site at least in part support Maurice Halbwachs’ collective memory theory. As an American who spent the first two decades of life in the Reagan years of the Cold War and the “veritable explosion” of Holocaust memory in the 1990s, I had subconsciously brought many expectations to the site with me. I could easily make sense of the East German memorials, but that I did not *expect* them conceivably suggests that the framework I viewed the Holocaust in before this project was largely from a collective — or cultural — memory. However, that I engaged with the narratives at the site that went *against* my expectations and sought to investigate them again indicates the importance of the individual in keeping memory discussion active. Halbwachs cannot be discounted, but the individual-centric viewpoint of James Young and the conflict with

narratives against my “collective” memories are what indeed led me to a deeper investigation of memory at Sachsenhausen.

Individuals do not always affect memory in a progressive or investigative manner. The “visiting” arsonists in 1992 at least for some time dictated what Jewish memory at the site would be — repressed and disappeared. Despite their efforts, their intention that the adjective *forgotten* would be used to describe the future of Jewish memory at Sachsenhausen with this destructive act were not realized though. The memory space that was built after the attack has only improved the narrative of Jewish memory at the site, and the evidence of their destruction encourages the visitor today to keep a knowledgeable eye on the past, but also on the uncertain future. Unlike Bordage, in the long term, these “visitors” did not affect memory as they had intended, but changed it nonetheless.

In 1997 at Buchenwald, anti-fascist activists placed bags over 300 grave markers at the Soviet Special Camp memorial. This was to signify that 80 percent of the prisoners at the site were Nazis who did not deserve commemoration (300 markers made up 80 percent of the total grave markers at the site.)<sup>73</sup> Conversely, in the early 1990s at Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen when the families of those that perished in the Special Camp did not feel adequately represented, they put up white wooden crosses in the forest adjacent to each camp where the mass graves of the Special Camp were contained. In her essay *Symbols That Face Two Ways*, published five years after the fall of communism in Germany, Sarah Farmer sums up this situation:

These signs and the forest grave markers at Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen, placed there without official sanction, are a reminder that although politicians, civil servants, and academics may be the official custodians of public memory,

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<sup>73</sup> Niven, *Facing the Nazi Past*, 52.

the families of those who suffered or died form an enormous and powerful constituency in shaping how these events are conceived and remembered.”<sup>74</sup>

Farmer was also one of the scholars in the early 1990s that were concerned with commemorations like these gaining too much attention, and that perhaps the post-communist German narrative would reflect an equation of Nazi and Stalinist crimes. However, to this point in post-communist history, this has not been realized in Germany by any of the aforementioned “custodians of public memory,” and the method in which Sachsenhausen in particular has dealt with this dual past has taken measures to cleanly separate the two ideologies. But the relevance of the individual claiming a memory narrative regardless of “officiality” is proven by this example as well. When the narrative did not match the visitors interpretation, they created a memory all their own. The impact of the individual, or groups of individuals on memory cannot be marginalized, neither for chaste or malicious intentions. However, with this in mind we can recall from Young that “the motives of memory are never pure”, no matter how much they seem to be.

It is the visitor in the arena of memory that claims the memory narrative that suits them. At Sachsenhausen today, the visitor can reinforce the narratives they already know, learn new information and share in novel discussion about what they have learned, and is free to experience whatever emotion is evoked at any narrative at the site without being steered into how they *should* feel about a certain exhibit. Even if the visitor is still drawn to the hulking monolith that still towers over the camp grounds, they are free to feel sorrow, lay down flowers or light a candle, or place a stone upon its’ mantle to mourn a Jewish relative. Devoted former communists are equally as welcome to let pride

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<sup>74</sup> Farmer, *Symbols That Face Two Ways*, 111.

swell in their chests as they reflect on their former nation and the memorial packed with 100,000 people on that great day of victory in 1961, if they so choose. Despite what the official keepers of memory suggest at any site, the memory and the memorial will always belong to the people.

## Conclusion

Museums are important because they serve to remind us of who we are and what our place is in the world. Their power is due to their ability to operate at a variety of levels: they are significant to us as individuals, as a member of a community, even as a statement of nationhood.<sup>75</sup>

Peter Davis

The present generation may rewrite history, but it does not write it on a blank page.

Lewis A. Coser

The quote by Peter Davis succinctly sums up the three major reasons the memorial space at Sachsenhausen has been, and remains, so important. The GDR adapted the site to make a “statement of nationhood” and the post-communist discussion reflects the complications of memory work and state identity in present day Germany (community). The preceding section addressed the importance of the memory site to individuals, and conversely, how important individuals are to keeping memory alive at the site.

The GDR constructed a nationalistically motivated memory at the site to validate the new government. The narrative was unidirectional, and monotonic. The tale of communist victory would be proclaimed from the heart of the German East at the site. This thesis has investigated why the place of Sachsenhausen was important to the GDR establishing this narrative to “reclaim” the site and continually liberate it from its Nazi

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<sup>75</sup> Peter Davis, “Place Exploration: Museums, Identity, Community,” in *Museums and Their Communities*, ed. Sheila Watson. (New York: Routledge, 2007), 53.

past, quite literally through the monuments and exhibits installed in the communist era. The use of space at the memorial, both physical location of monuments and exhibits in the memory space, and what was included or removed in the memorial was utilized to explain the GDR narrative in full. Fortunately, unlike many sites in West Germany, and much of the terrain at the other GDR national memorials, portions of the Nazi landscape were not razed over and forgotten to build this new narrative. Although the GDR was reluctant and limited in the inclusion of victim groups at the memorial, ostensibly that they would take away from the victory narrative, they did bend to outside pressures, at least in some ways. After all, the SED wished to reunite Germany under its banner, and desired to be seen as the peace loving, better Germany. This was not one inflexible totalitarian, murderous government replacing another at the camp grounds.

Many changes have taken place at the site since the fall of the Berlin Wall. Several of the GDR era changes were drastically altered or removed completely. Yet again, not all of the GDR installments were erased. It is just as important to understand and consider how people have remembered events in the past, as pondering the events themselves. In order to grasp the full sense of “who we are and what our place is in the world” as Peter Davis suggests, the “history of memory” is equally as important, inextricably woven into the meaning of history itself. If every new memory regime were to destroy the ones that came before it and build a narrative anew, how would we ever gain a sense of “who we are and what our place is in the world?” This information would be an invention, not reflective of the past, severing any chance of gaining this type of perspective. Many places operate by a memory standard such as this, but Sachsenhausen is not one of them, and this makes memory work at the site interesting and relevant.

The decentralized concept of the site, along with the layers of memory that exist in the present configuration, laid down over time and continually being added by “custodians of memory” and visitors alike, are now much closer to what Bill Niven referred to as an ideal concentration camp memorial, than what Roger Bordage found so flawed about the museum in the early 1990s. Recalling Niven’s thoughts, it would be difficult to argue that Sachsenhausen does not support many of his ideas about what makes an ideal camp memorial. The camp addresses many aspects of its detailed history, often even when these choices are not popular. The physical changes at the site in the post-communist era have made the topography more visible as a whole, so that the visitors do not constantly find themselves in the shadow of the victory narrative. Perhaps most importantly, Niven’s statement calls for a place “where bias and idealization are replaced by a respect for complexities and multiple narratives.” Present-day Sachsenhausen is a model of such a place. Since 1993, the site has embraced a multiplicity of varied and complicated narratives that reflect the memory landscape of a Germany still coming to terms with both its National Socialist and Communist pasts. In a sense, Sachsenhausen is a site for the entirety of German memory since 1933. While much caution can and should be taken to never obstruct or lessen the burden of Holocaust memory at the site, the site serves as a location of contemporary German national memory and identity. Much of this memory is accessed through the varied narratives of Holocaust memory at the site, and some through non-Holocaust events, like the Soviet Camp exhibit.

The ability of the visitor to reflect, share in narratives, and change the memory at the memorial itself, ensures that memory in the memorial space will always progress, in a



self-sufficient manner. The decentralized concept allows the visitor to feel comfortable enough to participate in the memory at the site, and not feel steered to a specific narrative. They can convert the victory monument to a gravesite, or proudly remember their socialist relatives who ceased the existence of the Nazis on the entire European continent. The memorial will ultimately always belong to the people, and as long as they are engaging in the memorial space and furthering the dialogue of the varied narratives at the site — accessed via the many layers within it — Sachsenhausen will serve its purpose. This dialogue will be a steadfast barometer for who we are, where we came from, and where we are heading, especially in contemporary Germany.

Appendix A



Figure 1: Camp entrance as constructed during the GDR era.

Source: Karen E. Till, *The New Berlin*, 207.



Figure 2: *Tower of Nations*.

Source: Gettyimages.





Figure 3. *Liberation* by Rene Graetz.

Source: Alisa Lawson January 22, 2008.

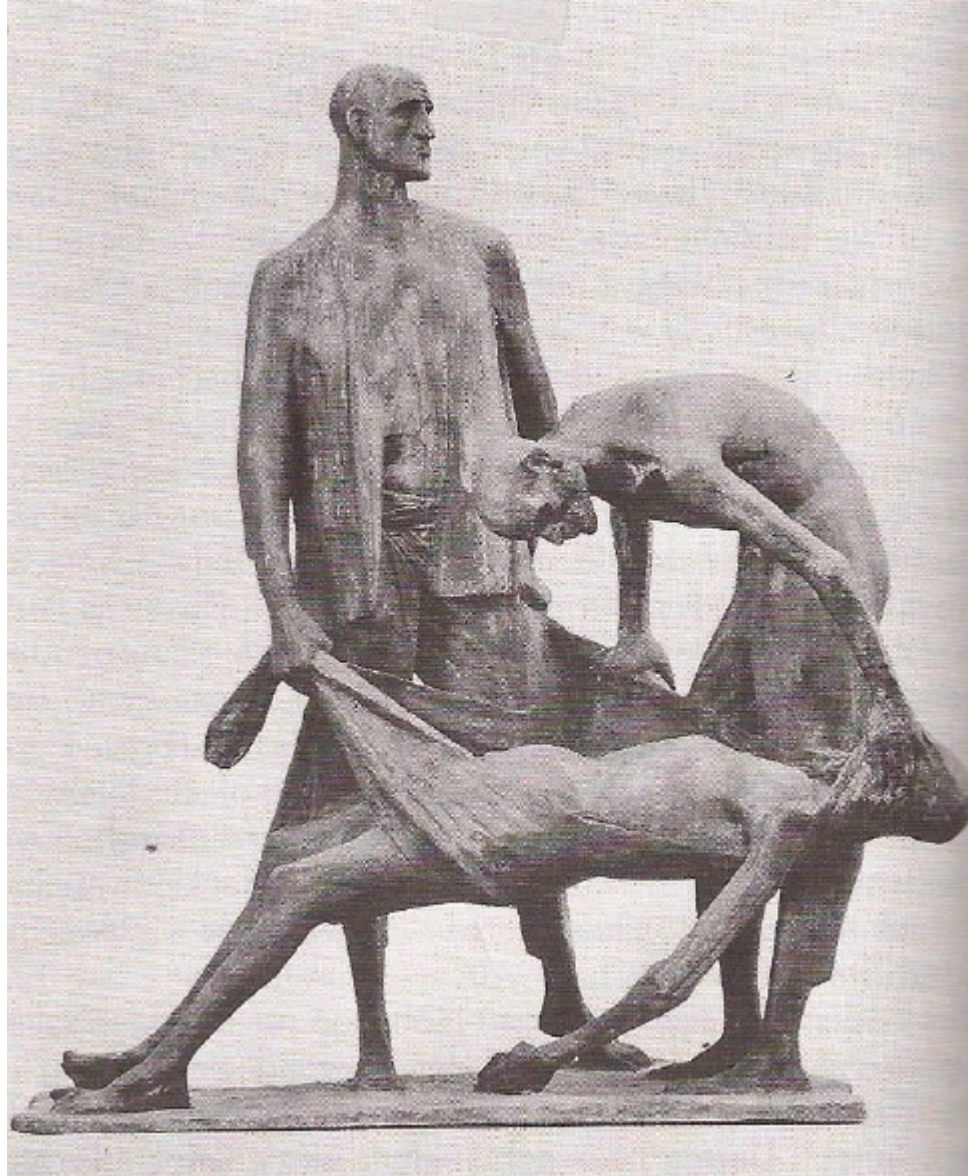


Figure 4. *Pietà* by Waldemar Grzimek.

Source: Stefan Becker, "Zur künstlerischen Gestaltung der Gedenkstätte Sachsenhausen," in *Von der Erinnerung zum Monument: Die Entstehungsgeschichte der Nationalen Mahn- und Gedenkstätte Sachsenhausen*, ed. Günter Morsch (Oranienburg, Germany: Schriftenreihe der Stiftung Brandenburgerische Gedenkstätten Band Nr. 8, 1996), 288.



Bundesarchiv, Bild 183-86205-0005  
Foto: Sturm, Horst | 10. September 1961

Figure 5: Swearing in of NVA soldiers at Sachsenhausen.

Source: Horst Sturm, September 10, 1961.





Figure 6: A GDR/NVA Commemorative Stamp including the *Tower of Nations*.

Source: Wikipedia

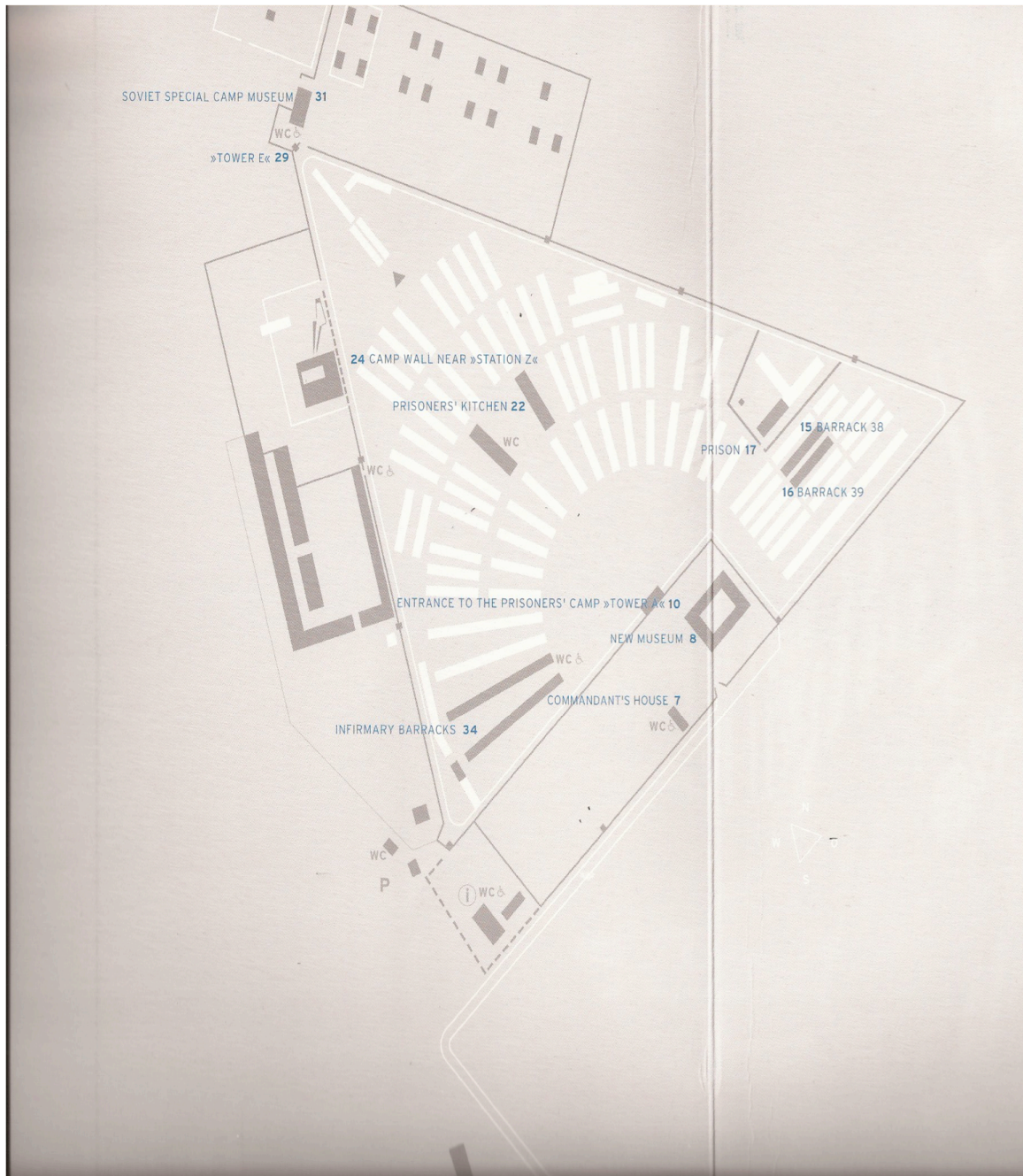


Figure 7: *Gedenkstätte Sachsenhausen* in 1933. The *Tower of Nations and Liberation* are represented by the small, dark triangle in the northwest section of the camp. (North corresponds toward the top of this page.) Station Z is just outside the west camp wall that is marked here with the number 24. Also, note the Soviet Special Camp outside the triangular walls to the north.

Source: Morsch and Ley, *Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp 1936-1945*, inside of back cover.



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